

3-29-1989

## Interview with Sat Kung (FA 83)

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TRANSCRIPTION

Name of Oral History Project South East Asians in America

Tape 1 of 1. The number of the tape being transcribed 1

Name of narrator: Sat. Kung

Address: Refugee Assistance Society

603 E. 11, B.G. KY

Tel. 781-8336

Name of principal interviewer: Susan Zurowski

Date of interview: 3/29/89 Place of interview: Refugee Assistance Society

Other persons present at interview: Translator Thawn Sun

Equipment used: Reel-to-reel; Cassette X; Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Tape used: Brand Ampex 672; Amount (side 1) all; (side 2) \_\_\_\_\_

Summary description of interview context and contents:

The interview took place at the Refugee Center with Sat Kung and a translator. We discussed what she thought she'd find in the U.S. and compared it to Cambodia. The translator also spoke on a couple of his views especially when she seemed at a loss. We covered homes, values, attitudes, expectations and hopes.

ZUROWSKI: March 29, 1989 at the Refugee Center with Sat Kung. Susan Zurowski, we're talking about concepts of America.

ZUROWSKI: If you would, could you please state your full name.

THAWN: [Restates Question in ~~Cambodian~~ *Khmer*]

KUNG: Sat Kung

ZUROWSKI: Okay. Could you tell me where you were born and when?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She was born in \_\_\_\_\_

ZUROWSKI: Which is?

THAWN: In *Kampuchea*.

ZUROWSKI: Okay. Um, what did your parents do to make a living?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: They were farmers.

KUNG: Farmer.

ZUROWSKI: And you came to America when?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: In 1988.

ZUROWSKI: In Cambodia, what did you do?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She went to school and then she met her husband and she get married.

ZUROWSKI: The best you can, describe you home.

THAWN: [Restate]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Her, her. She have four rooms. Her house in Kampuchea. Had nine.

THAWN: [Questions about house]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: They had the roof.

KUNG: [Further response]

THAWN: The roof make up of brick, you know. Use brick to make a roof. Because it last long time.

ZUROWSKI: What did you think homes in Bowling Green would be like?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Response]

THAWN: um, uh.

KUNG: [Further response]

THAWN: She said that houses in America is you know Completely no air leaking. Compact, right. In ~~K~~ampuchea they like to have house like, the air can travel from one side to one side. Lot of windows, upon up.

ZUROWSKI: When did you decide to leave Cambodia?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Okay, she said, uh. The reason she decide to leave Cambodia, because of the communists. The Vietnamese communist occupy ~~K~~ampuchea.

THAWN: [On own] In my country they call, ~~K~~ampuchea. Americans call it Cambodia. But in correct way, called ~~K~~ampuchea. Spelled ~~K~~-a-m-p-u-c-h-e-a, ~~K~~ampuchea.

THAWN: [Back to Kung's response] Okay, the reason she leave the country because of the communist, the Vietnamese communist occupy ~~K~~ampuchea. That's why she leave

THAWN: [Asks clarifying question]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Yeah, she left the country in 1982.

ZUROWSKI: Can you tell me how you left?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She left uh, Phnom Penh which is. Phnom Penh is the capitol of ~~K~~ampuchea. She left ~~K~~ampuchea, she left Phnom Penh by boat. And then after the boat then she got on a train. And then after the train, then she walked in the jungle to get to the camp. Ah, Thailand - Cambodian border camp.

THAWN: [Questions and responses go on for a short time]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Okay. At the camp, the Thailand-Cambodian border they call . I don;t know how to spell it.

ZUROWSKI: How did you find out about America?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [responds]

THAWN: [Further questions]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, the reason she find out America, because her brother in law stay here in Bowling Green. And so she wrote a letter and look for her, looking for her brother. She thought maybe somewhere in the camp find  
come Bowling Green.

ZUROWSKI: Why did you want to come to America?

THAWN: Why she decide to come to America instead of other country?

ZUROWSKI: Um uh.

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said the rea on want to come here because of her brother and her family's here. That's why she want to come instead of other country.

ZUROWSKI: Before coming to America, what was your opinion of the United States?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, she can not live in the camp because. The reason she come here is because of her brother. She can not live in the camp because the Vietnamese soldier. The Vietnamese communist soldier attack the camp night and day. And kill a lot of people. And they have no choice they come to America and her brother

ZUROWSKI: Tell me what you thought you'd find in America.

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, she thought when she was in the camp  
come to America. Uh, the American government will help the children, help her family. Help her family and help her children to go to school.. Have a good future for the children.

ZUROWSKI: Along those lines, tell me what you think your future in Bowling Green will be like.

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: [Clarifying question]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, her future, for her children look good at this point because Bowling Green is squat little town. Her children can go to school and come back and study at home not like in a city. And her, and her family and, uh, economic and her family, you know, it's okay, you know. Not the best, but it's okay.

ZUROWSKI: What do you think Americans feel about SoutEast Asians?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, she thought that Americans thought that the Asian people are just like Americans. That's all she thought. Treat just like American people.

ZUROWSKI: Have you found that to be so?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Yes. She said so far. [Laughs]

ZUROWSKI: What do you expect to give to America?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds, laughs]

THAWN: She said, she have nothing to give. But she will work. [laughs].

ZUROWSKI: What do you expect America to give to you and your family?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, come to America. The American people very nice. Help her clothes shelter the future, America give good education to her children. And after her children have good education they can help themselves

ZUROWSKI: What was family life like in ~~K~~ampuchea?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: [Questions again]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh. Okay, the life in ~~C~~ampuchea, the life in ~~C~~ampuchea and America different. Because in ~~C~~ampuchea, you know, in order for you to have a comfortable living you have to work hard. If you broke, without a job, you don't have, uh, government food stamp . Help those people to start, you know, to start, to find job you have a job, You have a job you can help yourself. You want to go out and find a job . You don't have all kind of office, unemployment office to help people find jobs . You don't have that. But in America, you don't have job you can draw food stamp, unemployment. Ah, you can go to the bureau of jobs you can find job there.

ZUROWSKI: What did you think American families would be like?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Long pause ]

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, in America, American families. Even though you rich or poor you still have a car to drive. But in Campuchea, you don't have a car to drive. If you very rich, wealthy, you have a car to drive. So everybody riding bicycles instead of car. But here, doesn't matter, if you poor you still have a car to drive.

ZUROWSKI: Can you tell me what the first thing you did when you got to America was?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: The first time she came she went to church. The First Baptist Church. And they provide her clothes. She came over here to this, uh, Cambodian Assistance Association. Get here some things to get started.

ZUROWSKI: What American things do you look forward to doing?

THAWN: Her? [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, uh, she look forward, you know, to American people. The American people are very modern people. Everything going so fast. And even the American people so aggressive, honest.

ZUROWSKI: What values do Cambodians and Americans share?

THAWN: [Long Question]

KUNG: [Long pause, Respod]

THAWN: She said, view of American is a power, super power country. She very respectful. She respect people in American country and . Campuchea is not powerful country, small country. big when she com to America, She come to America feel big because she thought she's an American. America is powerful country in the world.

ZUROWSKI: So what is, what is being an American to you?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: [Clarifies]

KUNG: [Responds but seems to be having hard time with an answer]

THAWN: She said, she want me to tell her . [laughs]

THAWN: [Own answer] Well I thought myself. Being an American is. It's very good to be in America because America economic ah, super power. language. And I'm an American citizen now. And I'm proud to be an American citizen because the land of opportunity. I can do anything I want to do. I can education, freedom. That's what, you know, be proud to be American because you have freedom to speak. is right, you know, what you think is right You can speak out and nobody go to jail or kill you like communist. That's what freedom all about. That's the truth, it's honest. [Laughs]. But I'm proud to be Campuchean too. Even though we small because it doesn't, I'm American today. But I'm still black hair and brown skin you know. I told myself I'm Campuchean. Can not change. But maybe I'm American citizen I still, you understand what I'm talking about? But I'm proud to be American citizen too. I'm very proud. And I will help .



ZUROWSKI: What are you hopes and ambitions for the future for your family and yourself?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: Uh, she said, uh, same answer. Her family future is for her children, that's all.

ZUROWSKI: What things would you like to change about America?

ThAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: [Clarifies]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, have nothing, no change. I asked you know about religion, people, . Some churches just push you to go to church, you know. Try to get you to go to their church. Yeah, nothing. No change.

ZUROWSKI: What did you find was the hardest thing to get used to?

THAWN: [Long restatement]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said, she can socialize with American people. she can

ZUROWSKI: Has you opinion of the United States Changed?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Laughs, responds]

THAWN: She said no.

ZUROWSKI: What would you like people in your family and those that come after you to know about?

THAWN: Her family? [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: [Clarifying? - long time]

KUNG: [Responds]

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THAWN: Well, she said, she mention earlier. She said she would tell her children you know, about, to know about ~~C~~ampuchea. Ah, she want her children to know about her life, what her life. Then they escape, work in the rice fields . Ah, work sixteen hours a day with no pay. Have no future, have no future. What's going to happen future.

THAWN: [Questions]

THAWN: That's all.

ZUROWSKI: What would you like people who listen to this tape to know?

THAWN: [Restates]

KUNG: [Responds]

THAWN: She said . I [Thawn] think we have um, people listen to that tape about her what the life, you know, the refugee camp. Some of them want to come to America but they can not come because all the politicians. A lot of people get killed in the camp. Everyday, because of the Vietnamese that escape from the communist hate communist. Then they try to convince people that like communist that's why they escape. That's why they try to eliminate the camp. They try to kill as much as they can. They come in everyday. Shot .

End Tape